

The Federal Depository Library (FDL) Handbook supersedes the Instructions to Depository Libraries (http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/instructions/index.html) and the Federal Depository Library Manual (http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/fdlm/index.html) with its four supplements. The Handbook serves as a one stop shop for legal requirements, Federal Depository Library Program requirements (Program), guidance and best practices.

When using this Handbook, it helps to understand the following:

- The FDL Handbook provides legal requirements in two ways. First, a compilation of the statutory mandates for both selective and regional depository libraries from chapter 19 of Title 44 is available in chapter two. Second, the legal requirements are also stated on each chapter represented by words such as “must,” “shall,” “mandated,” “need,” “required” or a variation thereof. To emphasize these legal requirements, the sentence in which these words appear, has been bolded in black with a yellow background.
- The FDL Handbook also provides Program requirements. These are the mandatory requirements of the program that provide actions that assist depositories in meeting their legal mandates. They are requirements that originated at the GPO. Program requirements appear in each chapter and they are stated using words such as “must,” “shall,” “mandated,” “need,” “required” or a variation thereof. To emphasize these program requirements, the sentence in which these words appear, has been bolded in black with a yellow background.
- To further help users to identify legal and program requirements, the following statement appears as a header on the top of each page of the Handbook: “Text highlighted in yellow refers to legal and/or program requirements for depository libraries.”
- In writing the Handbook, the volunteer teams from the depository community, were instructed to build flexibility into the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) through the recognition of the professional judgments made every day by depository coordinators. This is evident in the best practices offered in each chapter which appear in sentences using the words, “strong encouraged”, “should,” “may,” “encouraged” and variations thereof. They also appear in the section entitled, “Tips, Practical Advice, and Lessons Learned” found at the end of each chapter. Depository coordinators are strongly encouraged to use these practices and/or tips in their depositories when it makes sense to do so.
- To help depository coordinators point to the most important aspects of depository operations for busy library administrators, a section is offered at the end of each chapter entitled, “Important for Library Administrators.”
- Each chapter has a section entitled, “Did you realize that You Don’t Have To...?”. This section highlights those depository operations that were once requirements or have been perceived over time as requirements, but are not mandates.
- The section entitled, “What’s New or Important” reflects those issues which are new or important since some issues are not new, but they remain important to the FDLP.
- Hyperlinks appear in each chapter to take the user to more information about the subject. To help users locate information more readily, customized bookmarks have been created.

How to Interpret the Federal Depository Library Handbook

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- The FDL Handbook will be revised and updated periodically. Any questions about interpretation should be submitted to [askGPO](#) . Please select the category Federal Depository Libraries, sub-category Federal Depository Library Handbook.